

West End Wonders – Missing Child Policy

1. Purpose

West End Wonders is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of every child in our care. This policy outlines the actions staff must take if a child is missing or cannot be accounted for during any of our sessions.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, and session leaders working with children during:

- West End Wonders workshops
- Any on-site or off-site activities organised by West End Wonders

3. Definition

Missing Child:

A child whose whereabouts cannot be confirmed during routine supervision, transition points, or headcounts, and who may be at risk.

4. Responsibilities

All Staff

- Maintain active supervision and adhere to required ratios.
- Carry out accurate and timely headcounts and register checks.
- Report immediately if a child cannot be located.
- Follow this policy without delay.

Person in Charge (PIC)

- Acts as the lead when responding to a missing child incident.
- Ensures other children remain safe and appropriately supervised.
- Coordinates the search procedure and manages communication.
- Contacts parents/carers, emergency services, and other agencies when needed.
- Ensures detailed records and incident forms are completed.

5. Preventative Measures

To reduce the likelihood of a child going missing, staff must:

- Maintain correct staffing ratios at all times.
- Complete headcounts:
 - At arrival and departure
 - Before and after transitions
 - Before and after outdoor activities
- Keep registers accurate and up to date.
- Monitor and secure entry and exit points.
- Establish clear supervision zones where staff understand their responsibilities.

6. Procedure if a Child Is Missing

Step 1: Initial Check (First 0–5 minutes)

- Stay calm but act immediately.
- Review the register and most recent headcount.
- Confirm when the child was last seen and by whom.
- Check with school staff (if on school premises) for any updates on the child's movements during the day.

Step 2: Notify the Person in Charge

- Inform the PIC straight away.
- The PIC reallocates staff to maintain supervision of the remaining group.

Step 3: Coordinated Search (Up to 10 minutes)

The PIC leads a systematic search of:

- Activity rooms and classrooms
- Toilets, changing areas, and hallways
- Outdoor spaces and boundary areas
- Quiet areas or less-visible spaces

Search guidelines:

- Staff should search in pairs where possible.
- Call the child's name calmly—do not shout or cause alarm.
- Staff must not leave the premises unless instructed by the PIC.

Step 4: Secure the Setting

- Ensure all exits and entry points are monitored.
- Pause collection or drop-off procedures as needed.
- Keep all other children calm and engaged.

Step 5: Escalation

If the child is not located within 10–15 minutes, or sooner if there is an obvious risk:

- The Police must be contacted immediately.
- Provide accurate details: name, age, description, clothing, last known location, and any relevant medical or SEND information.

Step 6: Inform Parents/Carers

- The PIC informs parents/carers once emergency services have been contacted.
- Only factual information should be shared.
- Keep parents updated until the situation is resolved.

7. When the Child Is Found

- Ensure the child receives immediate reassurance and any necessary first aid.
- Inform parents/carers and the Police (if they were involved).
- Record how and where the child was found.
- Review welfare concerns if the child appears distressed or reports an issue.

8. Recording and Reporting

The PIC must complete a full incident report, including:

- Times, actions taken, and people involved
- Details of the search process
- When and where the child was found
- Follow-up actions or recommendations

Reports are shared with external agencies where required.

9. Review and Learning

- A debrief will take place as soon as reasonably possible after the incident.

- Any lessons learned will be documented.
- Policies, risk assessments, and staffing arrangements will be updated if needed.
- Findings will feed into staff training and ongoing safeguarding development.

Signed

Director of West End Wonders